(b) Does not arise.

(c) 62.58 million MT of iron ore has been exported during 2003-04.

(d) Does not arise.

Deployment of Army units in Terrorist, Naxal and Extremist affected states

†188. SHRIMATl KAMLA MANHAR: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether in view of the terrorism, Naxalism and extremism, any army unit has been deployed in any part of the country;

(b) whether there is any proposal of deploying army unit in Chhattisgarh in the context of the problem of the Naxal affected areas; and

(c) if so, by when the army unit is likely to be deployed?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) Army units are deployed for carrying out counter terrorism and counter insurgency opeations in the notified disturbed areas. Presently, the Army units are deployed in Jammu and Kashmir (12 Districts), Arunachal Pradesh (Tirap and Changiang Districts), Tripura (areas of jurisdiction of 29 police stations) and a 20 Km. belt in Arunachal Pradesh and Meghalaya along the Assam border in addition to the whole of Assam, Nagaland and Manipur Sates.

(b) and (c) There is no proposal for the deployment of Army unit in Chhattisgarh to tackle the naxalist problem.

Increase in maximum age limit for recruitment in Army

†189. SHRI NAND KISHORE YADAV: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to refer to reply to Unstarred Question 792 given in the Rajya Sabha on 21st July, 2004 and state:

(a) the reasons for fixing the maximum age at 21 years; and

(b) whether Government are considering to increase the maximum age limit, if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE) (a) The

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

minimum age at which a person can join the Army is 17.5 years. The maximum age limit for enrolment in the Army ranges from 21 to 34 years depending upon the category of trade. The upper age limit of 21 years is applicable to the Soldier (General Duty) category only. The main reasons for fixing the upper age limit of 21 years for the Soldier (General Duty) category are as under: -

(i) To maintain a younger age profile for better combat effectiveness of Soldier (General Duty) category, who constitute the cutting edge of the Army.

(ii) The minimum educational qualification for applying for this trade is 10th class/Matriculation, which is generally passed at the age of 16 to 17 years. To provide aspiring candidates with adequate opportunities for getting enrolled in the said trade after having passed 10th class/Matriculation, the maximum age has been fixed at 21 years.

(b) There is no proposal to increase the maximum age limit.

Bomb explosions in ordnance factory, Amravati, Maharashtra

190. SHRI DATTAMEGHE: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased state:

(a) whether more than 5000 bombs exploded in the ammunition depot in unit 9 of Ordnance Factory at Amravati in Maharashtra on the 31st of January, 2005;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the cause of the explosion;

(c) the number of persons killed/suffered injuries due to this explosion; and

(d) the measures taken to the check recurrence of such incidents?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI B.K. HANDIQUE): (a) An accidental fire had taken place in Building No. 273 of Unit No. 9 of Ordnance Factory, Chanda (OFCH), Maharashtra, on 31.1.2005. The exact numbers of bombs destroyed will be known after receipt of Board of Inquiry (BOI) Report.